

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

Please amend Claims 1 through 17, 20, 22, and 24 through 26 to read as follows. Note that all the claims currently pending in this application, including those not presently being amended, have been reproduced below for the Examiner's convenience.

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1. (Currently Amended) An optical device comprising:

a dividing unit that divides an image sensed by an image sensor into a plurality of areas;

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and

~~area discrimination means for discriminating a plurality of areas in a grouping unit that groups the divided areas of the sensed image into object areas on the basis of a predetermined condition;~~

a main object area determination unit that determines means for determining a main object area out of the plurality of object areas grouped by said grouping unit discriminated by said area discrimination means;

~~a main object area changing unit that changes means for changing the main object area to another object area; and~~

a focus controller that focuses control means for focusing on the main object area determined by said main object area determination unit and, when the main object area is changed by said main object area changing unit, changes to focus on the changed main object area.

2. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 1, wherein said main object area changing unit means has a direction designation unit that designates means

for designating a direction which is perpendicular to an optical axis of the optical device, and
said main object area changing unit determines an area next to the main object area in the
direction designated by said direction designation unit means as a new main object area.

3. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 2, wherein
said direction designation unit comprises means is a rotary operation member capable of rotating
at least in two directions.

4. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 3, wherein
said direction designation unit means is configured with a plurality of said rotary operation
members.

5. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 2, wherein
said direction designation unit comprises means is a slide-type designation member capable of
designating at least two directions.

6. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 5, wherein
said direction designation unit means is configured with a plurality of said slide-type designation
members.

7. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 2, wherein
said direction designation unit means is a track ball.

8. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 2, wherein said direction designation member is operated ~~in manual~~ manually.

9. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 1, wherein said ~~area discrimination means discriminates~~ grouping unit groups the divided ~~plurality of~~ areas in the sensed image on the basis of distances to objects included in the sensed image, and said main object area changing unit means has a direction designation unit that designates means for ~~designating~~ a direction along an optical axis of the optical device, and said main object area changing unit determines an area including an object a distance to which is next shorter or longer than a distance to an object included in the main object area as a new main object area depending upon the direction designated by said direction designation unit means.

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10. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 9, wherein said direction designation unit means is a focusing member of an image sensing optical system.

11. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 10, wherein said direction designation member is operated ~~in manual~~ manually.

12. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 1, further comprising an evaluation unit that calculates means for calculating an evaluation value by performing a predetermined operation for each of the ~~plurality of object areas discriminated~~ grouped by said grouping unit ~~area discrimination means~~, wherein said main object area determination unit means determines the main object area on the basis of the evaluation value

calculated for each of the ~~plurality of object~~ areas by said evaluation ~~value calculation~~ unit means.

13. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 1, wherein said main object area determination unit ~~means~~ automatically determines the main object area.

14. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 1, further comprising a priority order determination unit that determines ~~means for determining~~ a priority order, and wherein when a change in main object area is requested, said main object area changing unit ~~means~~ changes the main object area in the descending order of the priority order.

15. (Currently Amended) The optical device according to claim 14, further comprising an evaluation unit that calculates ~~means for calculating~~ an evaluation value by performing a predetermined operation for each of the ~~plurality of object~~ areas ~~discriminated~~ grouped by said grouping unit ~~area discrimination~~ ~~means~~, wherein said priority order determination unit ~~means~~ determines the priority order on the basis of the evaluation value calculated for each of the ~~plurality of object~~ areas by said evaluation ~~value calculation~~ unit means.

16. (Currently Amended) ~~An~~ A distance measuring point selection method comprising:

a dividing step of dividing a sensed image into a plurality of areas;

~~an area discrimination a grouping step of discriminating a plurality of areas in a grouping the divided areas of the sensed image into object areas on the basis of a predetermined condition;~~

~~a main object area determination step of determining a main object area out of the plurality of object areas grouped discriminated in said area discrimination grouping step;~~

~~a first focus control step of focusing on the main object area determined in said main object area determination step;~~

~~a main object area changing step of changing the main object area to another area;~~

~~a change instruction detection step means of detecting whether or not there is any instruction to change the main object area;~~

~~a main object area changing step of changing the main object area to another object area when there is an instruction to change the main object area; and~~

~~a control step of controlling to disable said main object area changing step when it is determined that there is no instruction to change the main object area in said change designation determination step; and~~

~~a second focus control step of focusing changing to focus on the changed main object area.~~

17. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, wherein, in said main object area changing step, an area next to the main object area in the a direction designated from outside is selected as a new main object area.

18. (Original) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 17, wherein the direction designated from outside is selected from at least two directions.

19. (Original) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 18, wherein the direction designated from outside is perpendicular to an optical axis.

20. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, wherein, in said ~~area discrimination~~ grouping step, the ~~plurality of divided~~ areas in the sensed image are ~~discriminated~~ grouped on the basis of distances to objects included in the sensed image, and, in said main object area changing step, an area including an object a distance to which is next shorter or longer than a distance to an object included in the main object area is selected as a new main object area depending upon a direction designated from outside.

21. (Original) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 20, wherein the direction designated from outside is an optical direction.

22. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, further comprising an evaluation step of calculating an evaluation value by performing a predetermined operation for each of the ~~plurality of object~~ areas ~~discriminated~~ grouped in said ~~area discrimination~~ grouping step, wherein, in said main object area determination step, the main object area is determined on the basis of the evaluation value calculated for each of the ~~plurality of object~~ areas in said evaluation ~~value calculation~~ step.

23. (Original) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, wherein, in said main object area determination step, the main object area is automatically determined.

24. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, ~~wherein~~, wherein the instruction to change the main object area detected in said change instruction detection ~~means~~ step is designated manually.

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25. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 16, further comprising a priority order determination step of determining a priority order, ~~and~~ wherein when a change in main object area is requested, in said main object area changing step, the main object area is changed in the descending order of the priority order.

26. (Currently Amended) The distance measuring point selection method according to claim 25, further comprising an evaluation step of calculating an evaluation value by performing a predetermined operation for each of the ~~plurality of object areas discriminated~~ grouped in said ~~area discrimination~~ grouping step, wherein in said priority order determination step, the priority order is determined on the basis of the evaluation value calculated for each of the ~~plurality of object areas~~ in said evaluation value calculation step.